

report reveals. We only have a day or two left in the 105th Congress. But if we need legislation—if we need greater resources to deal with this problem—I will do everything I can to make sure the 106th Congress addresses this issue and does what is necessary.

#### STRENGTHENING ABUSE AND NEGLECT COURTS ACT OF 1998

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce a bill that will help protect America's abused children. The bill is called the Strengthening Abuse and Neglect Courts Act of 1998. I am very proud to be joined in this effort by Senators ROCKEFELLER, LANDRIEU, and CHAFEE. I realize that time is running very short in this Congress, so my co-sponsors and I will look to move this legislation during the next Congress.

Mr. President, last year Congress passed a historic piece of legislation called the Adoption and Safe Families Act. The purpose of that bill was to encourage safe and permanent family placements for abused and neglected children—and to decrease the amount of time they have to stay in the foster care system.

One of the requirements of that new law is more timely decisionmaking by the courts with regard to adoption and other permanent placements for children. The time-lines instituted by the Adoption and Safe Families Act, however, have increased the pressure on already overburdened courts that deal with abused and neglected children.

If we provide assistance to the courts—so that administrative efficiency and effectiveness are improved—the goals of last year's important legislation will be more readily achieved. Improved courts will help more children find permanent homes more quickly.

That is the purpose of the bill I am introducing today. While acknowledging that abuse and neglect courts are already committed to quality administration of justice, this bill would further strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of the courts in the following five areas:

(1) Grants to State courts and local courts to automate data collection and tracking of proceedings in abuse and neglect courts. This would improve administrative efficiency and help evaluate overall performance—and it would also develop computer systems that can be replicated in other jurisdictions.

(2) Grants to reduce pending backlogs of abuse and neglect cases. These grants will go to courts in order to reduce and hopefully eliminate the backlog of cases awaiting disposition. The courts are given the flexibility to determine what method to use to reduce their backlog, but suggestions include establishing night court sessions, hiring additional court personnel or extending the courts operating hours.

(3) Development of "good practice" standards for agency attorneys. This would improve the quality of represen-

tation for children in the abuse and neglect system to ensure that their best interests are considered.

(4) Improved training (and cross-trainings) for judges, abuse and neglect attorneys, and court personnel. In this, as in so many areas, it's crucial that people with a special task receive special training. This bill would partially reimburse States for training of judges, judicial personnel, agency attorney's and attorneys representing children and parents in abuse and neglect proceedings. It would also help fund cross-training between court and agency.

(5) Technical assistance for the development of and education on "good practice" standards for attorneys practicing in abuse and neglect proceedings. The bill authorizes technical assistance funding to support abuse and neglect courts in the implementation of the Adoption and Safe Families Act.

(5) Expansion of the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program into underserved areas. The CASA Program has proven to be effective in ensuring that children in the foster care system are protected and receive appropriate services. This bill would help CASA expand its programs in the 15 largest urban areas and develop multi-jurisdictional programs in under-served rural areas, so that more children receive the benefit of their services.

When we passed the Adoption and Safe Families Act last year, I said that the bill is a good start, but that Congress will have to do more to make sure that every child has the opportunity to live in a safe, stable, loving and permanent home. One of the essential ingredients in this process is an efficiently operating court system. After all, that's where a lot of delays occur—for children who need permanent homes. The courts have been neglected throughout the years and while other areas of child welfare have been emphasized and funded, the courts have been left out of the process almost entirely.

It is my hope that with the introduction of this bill, we will start to change that syndrome—and make sure that courts will finally receive the funding and training they need to make a positive difference in the lives of some of America's most at-risk young people.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is reminded of the 5-minute rule.

Mr. DEWINE. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

#### RETIREMENT OF DAN COATS

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, at this desk on the floor of the Senate, I am surrounded by Indiana—the senior Senator from Indiana on my left, the junior Senator from Indiana on my right. Together, they have come to reflect the character of their sober, peaceful, and productive section of middle America. So close are the two Senators to one another, almost alone among Members of this body, they share offices in

the State of Indiana, they share a strong and calm temperament, and they share a commitment to the people they represent and to the people of the United States.

When this Congress adjourns in a few short hours, however, we will be losing one of those Senators, DAN COATS. DAN COATS has grown in wisdom and in the respect that his fellow Senators have for him in each of the 10 years during which he has served in the Senate—10 years that seem to me, in retrospect, to be all too short. With DAN COATS, what you see is what you get, a man who lives and defends and projects solid American values, a love of family, a love of country, a love of God, a man who works hard, a man whose convictions are strong and unshakeable but who combines with those convictions a willingness to listen to views different from his own and to reach accommodations on matters of policy when those accommodations do not shake his solid philosophical foundation.

During the course of his 10 years in the Senate, DAN COATS has become a good friend. I do not believe I can say that he is my closest friend in the Senate, nor I his. I can say, however, that I will greatly miss his calm good humor, his ability to get to the central point of any debate over policy or political philosophy, his rich dedication to the Constitution of the United States, to this body, and to the friends he has made in this body.

We are only 100 men and women in the Senate, Mr. President. We see a great deal of one another, and we see ourselves and our colleagues under great stress and under high pressures. As a consequence, it is very difficult for any of us to hide the vital features of our character or our personality from one another. DAN COATS, I must say, has never attempted to hide anything about his character or about his personality, and with me and with all of us it has worn well. He is the kind of individual whom you like and respect more and more with each passing day, and it is for just that reason that even if this Congress ends up by accomplishing many of the purposes that each of us as individuals set out to accomplish at the beginning of this Congress, we will still go home with an empty heart, knowing that those of us who return in January will return without the daily advice, counsel, and friendship of a magnificent U.S. Senator, DAN COATS of Indiana.

#### CHILD NUTRITION REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, there is an old saying that "where there is a will, there is a way." That is very true of this Congress.

Congress can work together when it wants to get a job done, when Members focus on resolving issues rather than sound bites for the nightly news. I was pleased for example, to have worked with Senators BENNETT, HATCH, DODD,